

THE STAGE

FROM A SPECIALTY TURN TO THE PARIS OPERA.

In MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE for December, 1895, appeared a portrait of the twin

Sisters Abbott. These two had made a considerable success in singing street ballads in the character of two waifs in



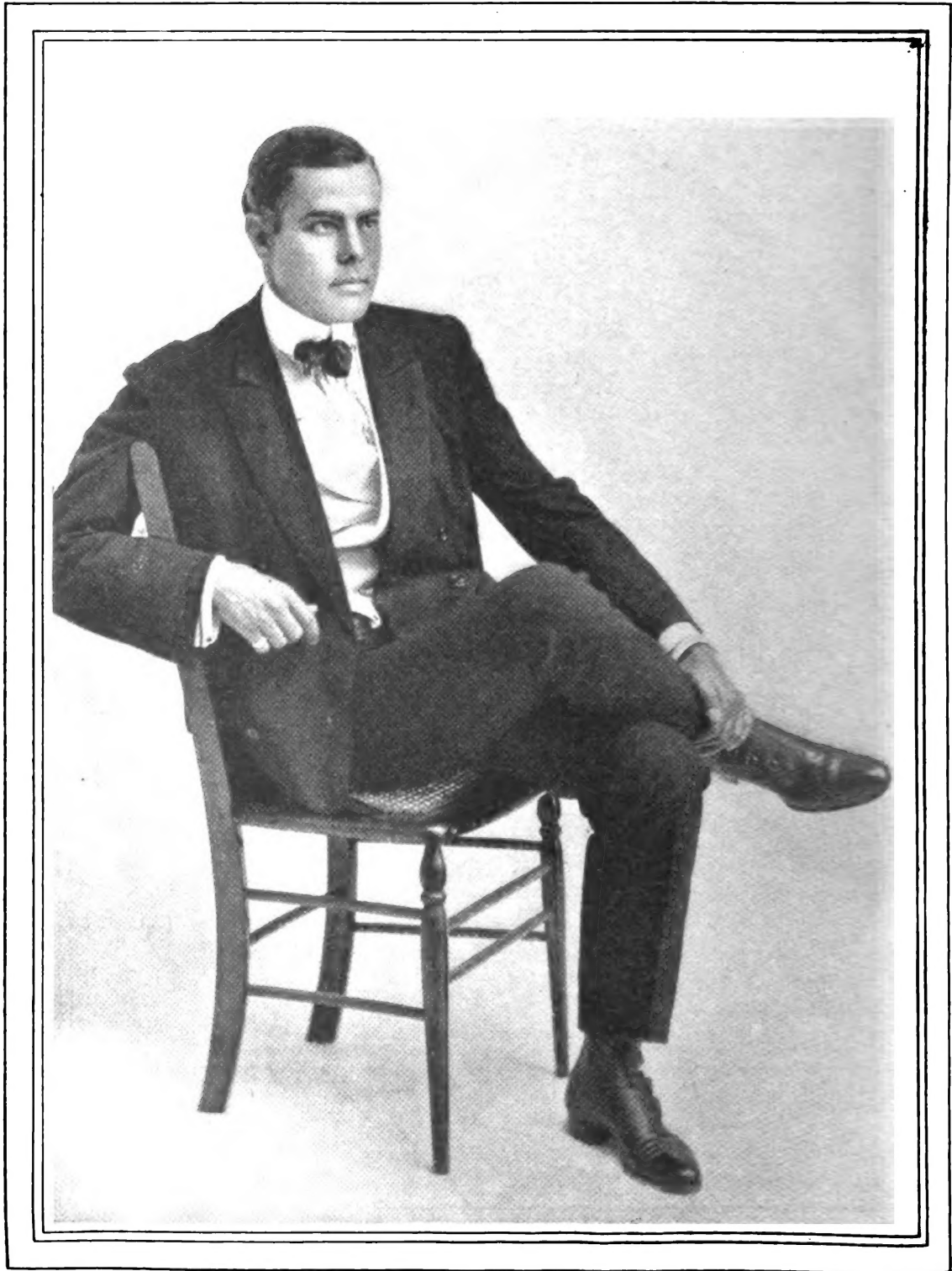
BESSIE ABBOTT, THE AMERICAN GIRL WHO RECENTLY MADE A SUCCESSFUL DÉBUT AS PRIMA DONNA AT THE PARIS GRAND OPÉRA.

From her latest photograph by Gessford, New York.

"Little Christopher" and "1492." In writing of the girls, who were then quite young, it was stated that they were the daughters of a widow from the South, to whom financial reverses had come. Accomplishments that had been cultivated merely for the entertainment of friends had become the mainstay of a family. "I Don't Want to Play in Your Yard" was the most popular of the songs in their

repertoire, and of Bessie's voice the writer remarked, "Its possibilities are so great that it seems a pity education cannot take her in hand for grand opera work."

The statement has become a prophecy. Miss Abbott today is engaged for two years at the Grand Opéra, Paris. She made her début there on December 9 last as *Juliet* and proved a success. One of



VINCENT SERRANO, WHO HAS GONE TO LONDON TO PLAY "LIEUTENANT DENTON" IN "ARIZONA."

From his latest photograph by the Burr McIntosh Studio, New York.



LILLA MCCARTHY, WHO HAS BEEN CALLED ONE OF THE HANDSOMEST ACTRESSES ON THE ENGLISH STAGE. SHE HAS BEEN PLAYING WITH WILSON BARRETT IN AUSTRALIA.

From a photograph by Talma, Sydney.

the Paris papers speaks of it as a veritable sensation, and adds that the public hailed with enthusiasm the advent of a star. Her voice, the writer goes on to say, possesses extraordinary purity and flexibility. So decided was her hit that

M. Gailhard, the director of the Opéra, intrusted to Miss Abbott the difficult part of the *Bird* in "Siegfried," with Jean de Reszke. This was regarded as the great event of the operatic season.

With her sister Jessie, Miss Abbott

sang for a time in the London music halls and then in private houses throughout England, following on the hit in "Little Christopher" here. Then the

Miss Abbott in all probability will be heard at the Metropolitan after her two years' contract in Paris is finished. Her advent has come at a time when Mr.



VIOLA GILLETTE, WHO APPEARS AS "PRINCE CHARMING" IN "THE SLEEPING BEAUTY AND THE BEAST."

From a photograph by Feinberg, New York.

sisters were brought back to America by Charles Frohman, in the supporting company for Chevalier's second tour of the country. The enterprise, however, resulted in failure. It was after this that the determination to fit Miss Bessie Abbott for grand opera was made.

Grau is badly in need of some new star to awaken the enthusiasm of his public. Her real name is Pickens.

A NEW FIELD FOR THE AMERICAN MANAGER.

"The Sleeping Beauty and the Beast" is among the few substantial successes of



NANCE O'NEIL, THE YOUNG AMERICAN ACTRESS WHO IS MAKING A TOUR OF THE WORLD IN EMOTIONAL PARTS.

From her latest photograph by Talma, Sydney.



ANNIE O'NEILL, APPEARING AS THE HEROINE IN "SWEET AND TWENTY."

From her latest photograph by Sarony, New York.

the present New York season. In costliness of costuming and of mounting, this importation of London's 1900 Drury Lane Christmas pantomime has been surpassed by nothing shown on our stage. It seems altogether likely that Klaw &

Erlanger will now make an annual feature of serving up to Americans some one of the dozen or more extravaganzas that are introduced to London every Boxing Day—the day after Christmas.

The successor to "Beauty and the



EARLE RYDER, WHO IS "WILL BROWER" IN "EBEN HOLDEN."

From a photograph by Throbeck, Denver.



JOHN E. KELLARD, STARRING IN "THE CIPHER CODE."

From a photograph by Schloss, New York.

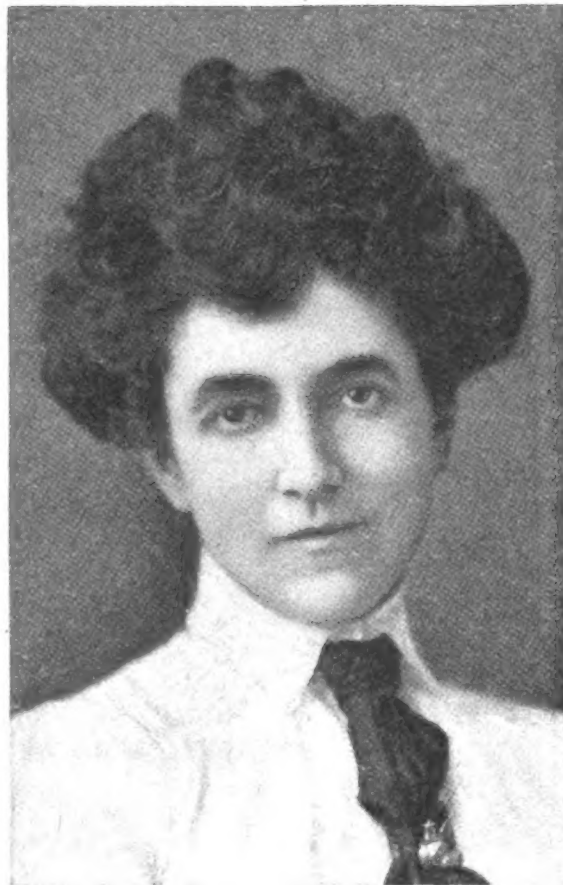
Beast" at Drury Lane last Christmas was "Blue Beard."

A portrait is given of Viola Gillette, "principal boy"—to use the British pan-



BLANCHE HALL, APPEARING AS "MARY LARKIN" IN "LOVERS' LANE."

From a photograph by Chickering, Boston.



ELSIE DE WOLFE, STARRING IN "THE WAY OF THE WORLD."

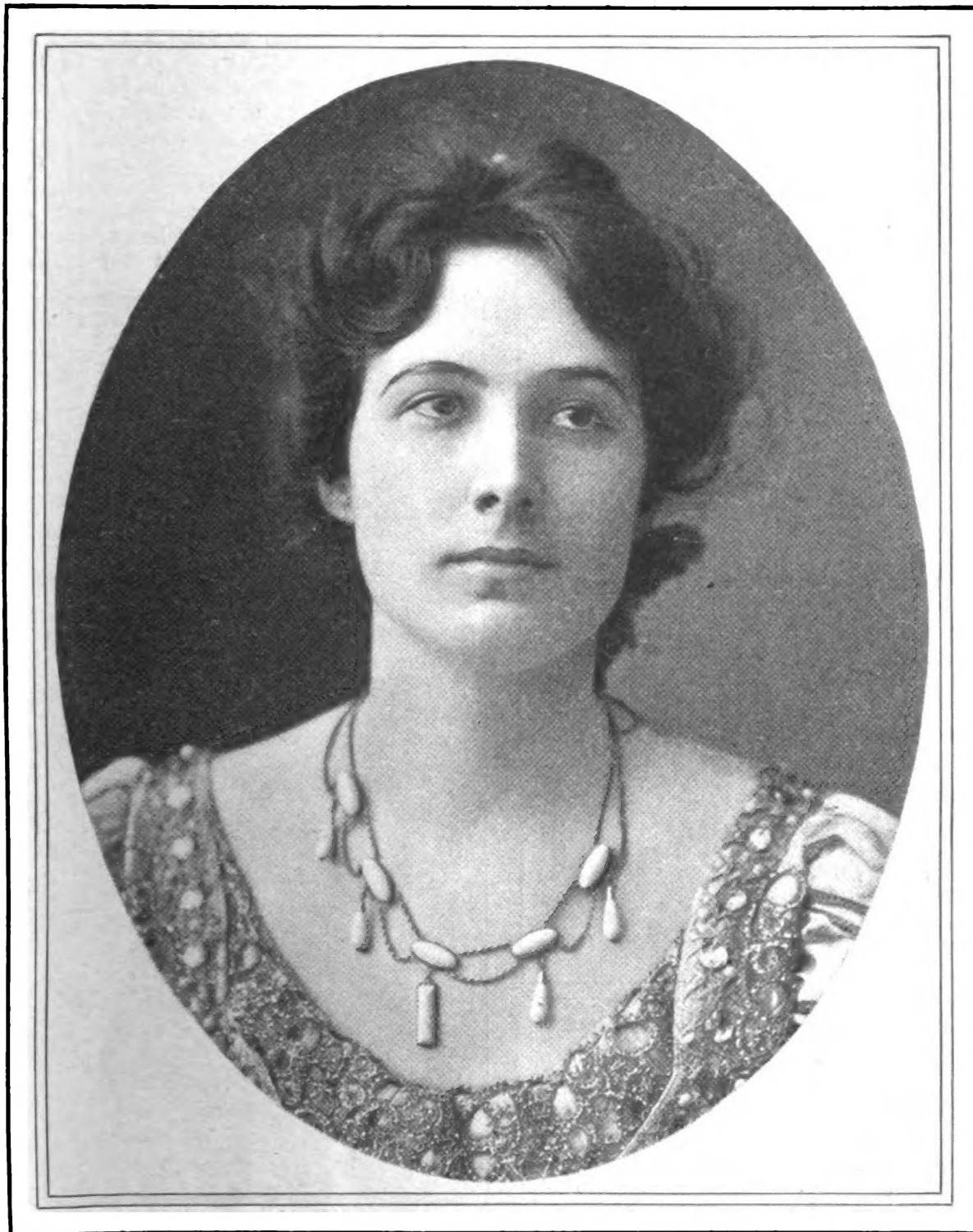
From her latest photograph by Doreney, London.



MRS. G. H. GILBERT, WHO AT EIGHTY HAS CREATED A NEW ROLE IN "THE GIRL AND THE JUDGE."

From her latest photograph by the Burr McIntosh Studio, New York.

tomime term—in "The Sleeping Beauty." In other words, she plays the *Prince*. Miss Gillette is no relation of the re- for next season, Charles Frohman has already arranged to bring over "Bluebell in Fairyland."



MARCIA VAN DRESSER, APPEARING WITH OTIS SKINNER IN THE TITLE ROLE OF "FRANCESCA DA RIMINI."

From her latest photograph by Windett, Chicago.

nowned William, but is kin to Maude Adams in the sense that she was born in the same town—Salt Lake City. She was in London last spring with Alice Nielsen's company.

Returning to the matter of pantomimes

ANNIE O'NEILL AND NANCE O'NEIL.

Annie O'Neill, formerly leading woman with William H. Crane, retired from the boards on her marriage with the late Harry C. Miner, some four years ago. She returned to her old love in December



VIVIAN BLACKBURN, ONE OF THE FENCING GIRLS
WITH ANNA HELD IN "THE LITTLE DUCHESS."

*From a photograph by the Burr McIntosh Studio,
New York.*

last, taking in "Sweet and Twenty" the part created in London by Ellaline Terriss. Although the comedy has a record of eight months' run there, the New York verdict seems to agree with that expressed on the English performance in these pages last October. The play is thin to attenuation, and in spite of the fine cast Charles Frohman has given it, with W. H. Thompson, Harry B. Stanford, and little Donald Gallaher—the boy prince of "A Royal Family"—it seems doomed to follow in the footsteps of Basil Hood's other plays, "The Rose of Persia" and "Ib and Little Christina."

Nance O'Neil, the other American O'Neil, is a California girl. Her mother early perceived the talent in the child and had visions of a great career for her, but the father saw in the stage only the pathway to perdition. It is said he felt this so strongly he once begged the prayers of the pastor and people of his church in Oakland that his daughter might be saved from the footlights. Despite parental and church obstruction, the girl's love for acting increased. Finally she journeyed to New York in search of ways and means to gratify her ambition.

In New York Miss O'Neil met McKee



BESSIE WYNN, ANOTHER OF THE FENCING GIRLS
IN "THE LITTLE DUCHESS."

*From a photograph by the Burr McIntosh Studio,
New York.*

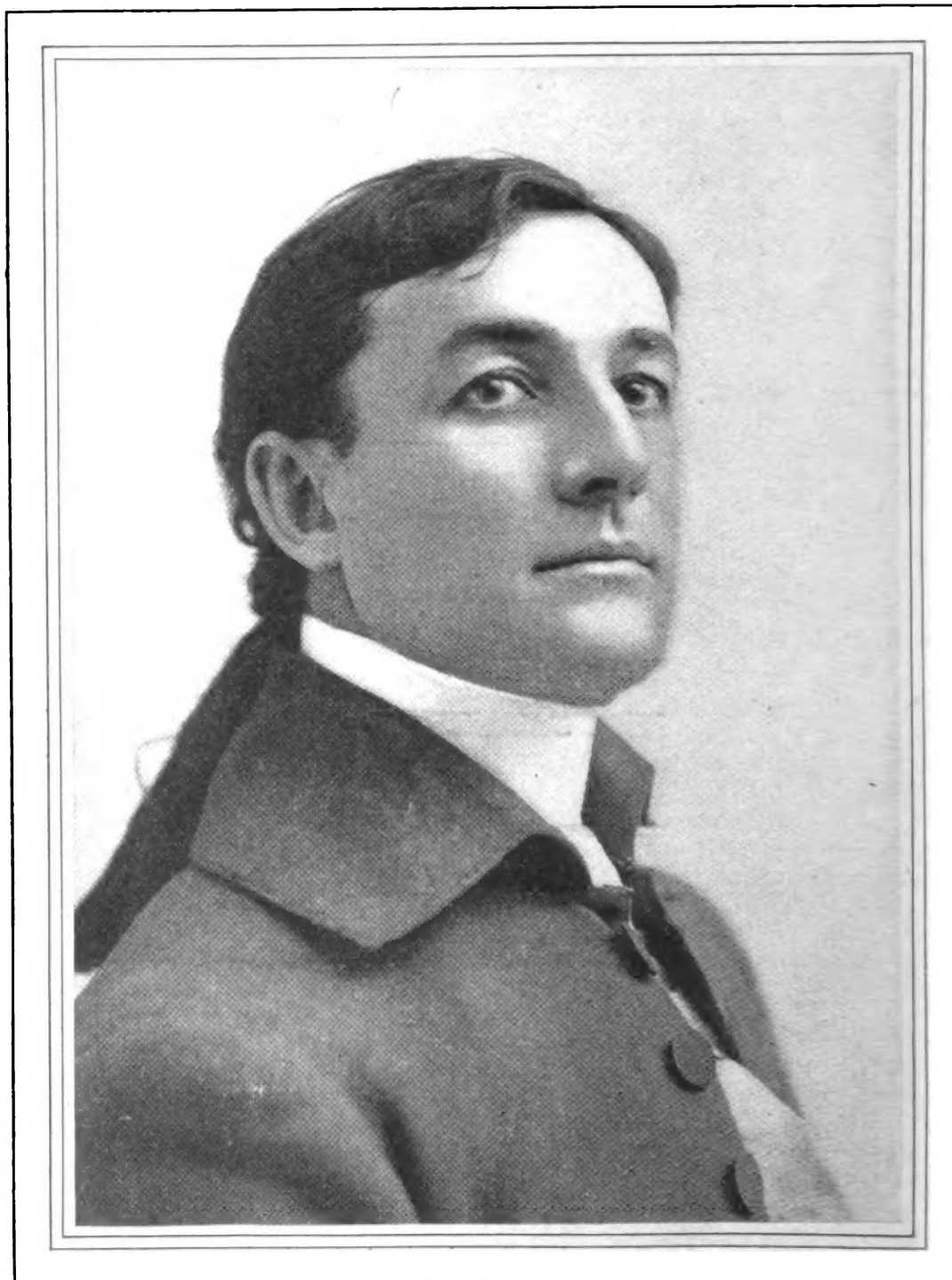


ALISON SKIPWORTH, WITH ELSIE DE WOLFE, AS THE INJURED WIFE IN "THE WAY OF THE WORLD."

From her latest photograph by Marceau, New York.

Rankin, who leaped into fame with "The Danites," and who saw in the girl of twenty two the most promising material he had yet had to work with. He placed

appeared in San Francisco as *Nancy* in "Oliver Twist" and in the title rôle of "Leah the Forsaken." She made good in these impersonations, and Mr. Rankin



WILLIAM COURTLEIGH, LEADING MAN WITH VIRGINIA HARNED, AS "JOHN BEVERLEY" IN "ALICE OF OLD VINCENNES."

From a photograph by Sarony, New York.

her in the melodrama "True to Life," and took her on tour. Her methods were different from most. People felt that in her was the originality of genius, and they remembered the actress after the play was forgotten. In the fall of '98 she reached her own State again, and ap

grew bolder. He cast her for *Magda*, *Fedora*, *La Tosca*, *Camille*, and was so satisfied with her reading that he determined on a still more radical departure.

He set out on a tour of the world with his young star. The first stop was at Sydney, Australia. The company arrived

there in March, 1900, and a ten weeks' season was so successful that a return engagement was booked. Three months were then spent in Melbourne, where one of the critics spoke of Miss O'Neil as "her of the haunting voice." Many other Australian cities were visited and a tour of New Zealand was added. In August of last year Miss O'Neil left Australia for South Africa. Further bookings are for Cairo, Athens, Constantinople, Rome, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Paris. If the California actress, speaking the English tongue, should succeed in holding her audiences in these cities of alien speech, she will indeed be entitled to the most eulogistic things an enthusiastic press agent has written of her.

But even should she win out in these foreign parts and should add thereto a London triumph, she still will have New York to conquer—a stronghold before which the stoutest hearts in the artistic realm have quailed. This is not to say that the New York hall mark is the standard of merit, but its approval is a thing of its own, a thing altogether apart from alien judgment.

THE DOYENNE OF THE AMERICAN STAGE.

Mrs. Gilbert was eighty years old last October, and yet she learned a long new part in "The Girl and the Judge" which she plays with all her accustomed gusto. The only sign of incapacity is a slight limp from rheumatism. Mrs. Gilbert was born in England, her maiden name being Susan Hartley. When about twenty five years old she married G. H. Gilbert, the ballet master at the royal opera house, London, and entered upon her professional career as a dancer. The pair came to America in 1849 and went West. There Mrs. Gilbert graduated from dancing into comedy old woman parts. Her first New York appearance was in 1864 at the old Olympic, on Broadway, near Bleecker Street. In 1869 she joined Augustin Daly's company, and made her debut as *Mrs. Kinpeck* in Robertson's "Play" at the opening of the original Fifth Avenue Theater on the site of the present Madison Square, behind the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

She remained under Mr. Daly's management for thirty years—until his death, in fact—and was then at once engaged by Charles Frohman. Under him she has been an important factor in Annie Russell's three big successes—"Miss Hobbs," "A Royal Family," and "The Girl and the Judge." It is not too much to say that Mrs. Gilbert is greeted with more

genuine cordiality each night of her appearance than is any other actress on the American boards.

PLAYERS IN "FRANCESCA."

New York's mid season was marked by a refreshing oasis in the mass of mediocrity which appears to dominate the present theatrical year. Otis Skinner brought to the Victoria a revival of George H. Boker's "*Francesca da Rimini*," and, although the theme be gruesome in the extreme, the poetry in the lines and the ability of the actor were combined in a performance that gave real satisfaction to the true lover of the drama. As *Lanciotto*, the misshapen soldier who finally allows his heart to go out to the beautiful *Francesca*, Mr. Skinner shows that he is nearing a niche set so high in fame's temple that he will not be jostled by many neighbors when he reaches it.

Last season he almost conquered New York with "Prince Otto," and he gained its hearty approbation for the few performances he gave of *Norbert* in Brownings' "On a Balcony." In "*Francesca*," he has entered in and taken possession of its enthusiasm.

In his early youth Otis Skinner appeared in this same piece with Lawrence Barrett, playing *Paolo*. In the autumn of 1884 he joined Augustin Daly's company, appearing first in the comedy from the German, "A Wooden Spoon." In this same season he created *Harry Darnask* in "A Night Off." The next year he was *Mr. Page* in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," and the season following was *Lucentio* in "The Taming of the Shrew." Mr. Skinner's last appearance at Daly's was in 1888 as *Lysander* in "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

For his support in *Francesca*, besides Mr. Boucicault, with his fine presence and discriminating interpretation, Mr. Skinner has William Norris for the *Jester*. Mr. Norris filled a similar part last season in "In the Palace of the King," contributing the best work of the production. He is excellent in this other fool's garb, although he does not make those who have seen both forget the impersonation of Louis James. Another recruit from "In the Palace of the King" is Marcia Van Dresser, a lady who is running the theatrical gamut in brief space. Less than four years ago she sang a small rôle in "The Fortune Teller" with Alice Nielsen. The following winter she scored as the adventuress in "The Great Body" at Daly's.

Her triumph in the "Ruby" was the more remarkable from the fact that she did not enjoy the advantage of appearing in the part on the opening night and so missed the mention of the next day's papers. She assumed the character at the third performance, after Blanche Bates' sudden retirement. It is to the public itself Miss Van Dresser owes her rapid promotion.

She is a Southerner, and her deep contralto voice suggested to her possibilities in the operatic field. She began with the Bostonians. After Mr. Daly's death, Miss Van Dresser went back to the Bostonians for a while, taking the place of Jessie Bartlett Davis. Her work as the *Princess of Eboli* was clear cut and convincing, but did not give her the scope her abilities deserve. As *Francesca* she has the beauty and grace the part demands, but is somewhat lacking in the repose required for the earlier scenes. Her strength lies in compelling men to bow to her behests, not in meekly accepting their homage.

Francesca's maid is played by a third member of the "In the Palace of the King" cast—Gertrude Norman, who impersonated the blind girl.

THE CAREER OF WILLIAM COURTLEIGH.

In reply to the talk about the American invasion of London stageland, it has been aptly pointed out that more English actors come to this country each season than there are Americans who go there. Looking into the matter a little more closely, one finds a still bigger balance on the British side of the account. Taking the birthplace of our leading resident players into the reckoning, we discover that Richard Mansfield, Henry Miller, William Faversham, Sydney Brough (leading with Maude Adams), Campbell Gollan, John Glendinning, Cissie Loftus, Harry B. Stanford (in "Sweet and Twenty") and Edward J. Morgan were all born in King Edward's dominions across the sea, while Margaret Anglin and William Courtleigh first saw the light in Canada.

Courtleigh, leading man with Virginia Harned in "Alice of Old Vincennes," although only thirty five, has had quite a varied stage career. His family removed from Guelph, Ontario, to St. Louis when he was only three. On reaching years of discretion, he studied law. But the stage had a mighty attraction for him, and with his pleasing personality it is little wonder that in amateur productions he was cast for *Romeo*, *Orlando*, and other lovers in

the legitimate. The passion grew with what it fed on, and in due course the law tomes were flung aside in favor of the prompt book. Young Courtleigh accepted an opening offered him with a small repertoire company touring the Western cities. With it he remained for three years. He did not play *Hamlet* or *Iago*, but obtained a wide and useful experience in various rôles in the standard drama.

His first engagement of importance was with Fanny Davenport as juvenile lead. During his two seasons with her he played in "Cleopatra," "Fedora," and "La Tosca." In the summer of 1892 he was a member of the stock company at McVicker's, Chicago, and created *Sam Warren* in the first production of "Shore Acres." The following autumn he came to New York on a four years' contract with Augustin Daly and the verbal understanding that he was to succeed John Drew as leading man of the theater. He resigned after one year because this agreement was not carried out. During his Daly career he played *Robin Hood* in "The Foresters" and the *Lord* in "Taming of the Shrew." After that he was *Perry Bascom*, the man who almost goes under the buzz saw in "Blue Jeans," *Frank Layson* in "Old Kentucky," and leading man with Helen Dauvray.

The part that brought Courtleigh into prominence in New York was that of the Indian, *John Swiftwind*, in "Northern Lights." The play was one of the few successes at the American Theater when that house was devoted to melodrama, and Courtleigh was mistaken by many of the audience, and some of the critics, for a real redskin. The program read like this:

JOHN SWIFTWIND - WILLIAM COURTLEIGH.
(A full blooded Sioux Indian, graduate of
Yale College.)

There was no intent to deceive, and that people should have read into the line a meaning it did not set out to convey was a distinct compliment to the actor's impersonation.

The following season—that of 1896-'97—he was engaged by Daniel Frohman for prominent rôles in the Lyceum stock, and remained there for two years. During that time he appeared in "The Princess and the Butterfly," "The Tree of Knowledge," and "Trelawny of the Wells." He was then secured to play leads with William H. Crane, and made his début as *Sir Reginald Farquhar* in that luckless affair "Peter Stuyvesant." When this was displaced in favor of "A Rich

Man's Son," Courtleigh became the son aforesaid. In the autumn of 1900 he created the hero in "Lost River," the new melodrama by the author of "Blue Jeans." Last summer he originated *John Ridd* in the production of "Lorna Doone" at the Chicago Opera House.

TWO WINNERS IN "THE TOREADOR."

Although Francis Wilson's name appears in large letters at the head of the program, he is by no means the chief factor in "The Toreador," which was written for the stock company at the London Gaiety. The part of *Sammy Gigg*, the "tiger" looking for a job, happened to fit him, and Messrs. Nixon & Zimmerman, the American managers of the new musical comedy, secured him for it. The public therefore is to be congratulated. It gets a bright and tuneful musical entertainment with Wilson thrown in. No doubt James T. Powers would have had the part had he not been busy with "The Toreador's" London predecessor, "The Messenger Boy."

"The Toreador" is infinitely superior to "The Messenger Boy." The company playing in it at the Knickerbocker go at their work with snap and dash and the whole is reeled off right merrily. Christie MacDonald is easily the star of the cast, if merit be allowed to count in place of salary, reputation, and big type. She has the part created on the other side by Marie Studholme. Part of the while she is required to appear in a man's golf suit, and never did she look prettier in her life. There is not the faintest touch of indelicacy in the whole impersonation.

It is not so very long ago that Miss MacDonald, who, by the way, is a Canadian by birth, was a minor member of the Francis Wilson company. It is the irony of fate that affords her in "The Toreador" an opportunity to snatch the honors from her whilom chief. When Sousa's successor to "El Capitan," "The Bride Elect," was given in this same theater some three years ago, Miss MacDonald had the title rôle. Last season she won high praise as leading woman with Peter Dailey in "Hodge, Podge & Co." In the autumn she went out with him in "Champagne Charley," but left before the collapse came. She was married recently to William Winter Jefferson, the youngest son of Joseph Jefferson.

Another winner in "The Toreador" is Joseph Coyne, who does the English chappie *Archie*. His manner of singing "Everybody's Awfully Good to Me" has put him in the straight line of promo-

tion either to stellar honors or a fat salary at Weber & Fields'. Mr. Coyne started in as a ballet dancer with Kiralfy's "Excelsior." After three years, he went into vaudeville with Ward, of the team Ward & Vokes. His next engagement was with Willie Collier in "Miss Philadelphia," where he appeared as *William Penn, Sr.* This led to his making a contract for five years with Rich & Harris, who placed him first in "The Good Mr. Best," a farce that came pretty near being the worst ever. It opened the Garrick one autumn some four years ago. Coyne's rôle was that of a dude, somewhat similar to the part he now has in "The Toreador." Then he was loaned to Hoyt & McKee for "A Stranger in New York," the last of the Hoyt farces to be performed in the metropolis.

When Louis Mann and Clara Lipman began starrng with "The Girl in the Barracks," Coyne was the young composer, and last season he enacted *Willit Work* with the Agoust Family in "The Star and Garter." It was in this short lived piece that he, Marie Cahill, and Otis Harlan burlesqued "David Harum," "The Gay Lord Quex," and "Richard Carvel." Last spring Coyne went to London with "The Girl From Up There" and played *Bertie Tappetit*, the character created here by Harry Davenport.

THREE MUSICAL MAIDS.

It is a coincidence that the subject matter for Lulu Glaser's new opera, "Dolly Varden," and that of the successor to "San Toy" at the London Daly's, should be drawn from the same source, the old comedy, "The Country Girl." There is, of course, a difference in their working out, and a decided one in their reception by the public, for "Dolly Varden" is a hit, while the English offering, which retains the original name, seems to lack the snap and vivacity that have characterized its predecessors in the George Edwardes repertoire. Miss Glaser surely deserves success, after the awful misfits of "Sweet Anne Page" and "The Prima Donna" with which she was handicapped last season.

"The Bostonians" have reached New York with their sequel to "Robin Hood," which oddly enough bears the name by which the first opera was known in England, "Maid Marian." The story carries *Robin* to the Holy Land to fight in the Crusades, and is a sad affair, both in plot and humor. The score contains a few catchy numbers, but suffers from the inevitable comparison with "Robin Hood."